

149^o *Sam. Heywood*

The blessedness of a benevolent temper.

A

S E R M O N

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By JOSEPH BURROUGHS.

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Comptroller





XX. ACTS 35.

---Remember the words of the Lord Jesus; how he said, *It is more blessed to give, than to receive.*

THE evangelist John observes, concerning the *things which Jesus did*; that if they should be written every one, the world itself could scarce contain the books that should be written*. And indeed it would have been an endless work, to record all the miracles which Christ performed, and every part of all the discourses he delivered, considering that he was always seeking opportunities *to do good*, both to the souls and to the bodies of men. Accordingly we see, that the history of his mi-

* xxi. John 25.

acles is recorded only in a summary way. And so likewise are his discourses themselves: otherwise what he did, in a course of some years ministry, in such numbers of places, and upon such a variety of occasions, could not have been reduced within the small compass of what the evangelists have left behind them. Even the longest discourses now handed down to us are probably no more, than the heads of what our Lord delivered on those occasions. And then what shall we say concerning those many passages in the gospels, where we are only told, that Jesus traveled to such and such places, and *preached the kingdom of God*?

Indeed it was not needful, that all the discourses which Christ delivered should be recorded; or the whole of those which are taken notice of. There is enough written and conveyed to us, to answer the good and gracious ends of the gospel-revelation. So that if even this text which I have now read to you, notwithstanding the excellent sentiments it contains, had not in express words been committed to writing; I say, if the author of this history of *the acts of the apostles*, who was likewise one of the four evangelists, had omitted recording it in this book, as he and all the rest of the evangelists did omit this and numerous other sayings of the blessed Jesus in their gospels; there

there would still have been enough left, to convince unprejudiced minds, that he was appointed of God to be the saviour of men, and that the doctrine ascribed to him is worthy of God, and wisely suited to the necessities of men, for reclaiming them from the love and practice of sin, and for encouraging them in the course of their duty, and thereby preparing them for a happy immortality.

Yet we have great reason to be thankful, that this divine sentence is preserved, and conveyed down to our time, as a saying frequently in the mouth of our heavenly instructor. Well did it become him, *who was in the bosom of the Father*, and best knew how to declare his mind: who knew, that then we should be most perfect in goodness, when we attained the nearest resemblance to the kindest and best of beings. Well did it become him, who through the course of his conduct gave proofs of his own delight in what he recommended to others: who continually *went about doing good*, though he met with the most unkind returns for it: *whose meat it was to do the will of him that sent him*, in effecting the restoration and the eternal happiness of sinful men, though in carrying on this work he often was destitute of the needful accommodations of life, and exposed to the utmost reproaches as well as hardships,
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and at length to a cruel and ignominious death. It was the view of exciting men to a resemblance of God, that induced him at any time to take this expression into his mouth. And that he did often express himself to this purpose, the apostle in our text plainly intimates. For when he desires the elders of the Ephesian church, *to remember the words of the Lord Jesus, how he said, It is more blessed to give, than to receive*; he appeals to them concerning a saying well known, a favorite expression of their common Lord and Master; delivered, not upon any one occasion only, but often delightfully repeated, according as fit opportunities presented themselves.

The occasion upon which the apostle used it in our text was, that of a farewell discourse to those Ephesian elders, assembled together at Miletus. And in putting them in mind of this saying, he exhorted them, as *overseers of the church of God*, to employ such hearty zeal, in their endeavours to do good to the souls of men, as rather *to labour with their own hands for the support of the weak*, in the course of their ministry, wherein he himself had given them an example, than to fail of *fulfilling that ministry*. In this disinterested self-denying way of conveying salutary instructions he signifies, they would secure to themselves the superior *blessedness*, mentioned

mentioned in that saying of Christ, which he desired them *to remember*.

This was the immediate occasion of recording *the words of the Lord Jesus*, as they stand in our text. But they are not confined to any one occasion. Indeed they are not only capable, but, by the frequent use which our Lord made of them, must have been designed by himself to be applied to all cases, where it is fitting that one should be kind and helpful to another. It may therefore be useful to us, to enquire particularly into the sentiments they contain. And here,

I. They point out to us this obvious thought; that it is more happy and more desirable to be able to help others, than to want assistance from them.

Men may indeed, and great numbers of men do, abuse their plenty to their own real hurt: they make their condition worse upon the whole, by the misimprovement of their plenty; and by perverting it from the purposes which it was fitted to serve, make themselves much more unhappy in their most important concerns, than they might have been without it; much more unhappy upon the whole, than their pious neighbours actually are in the midst of worldly distress.

But this is not the fault of the plenteous condition itself; but of those who abuse it. The condition itself, of being able to relieve,

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is in its own nature more defireable, than the condition of wanting relief. Notwithstanding that men may greedily desire more worldly substance, than it is likely they should ever be able to employ, and more than it is fit should lie in their hands alone; that is to say, notwithstanding men may be faulty in their desires relating to the things of this world: yet the condition itself, of being able to supply our own natural wants, and to be helpful to others, the ability of satisfying our own lawful desires, and at the same time of relieving our fellow-creatures, is in its own nature more happy, than that distress and anxiety, which unavoidably attend those who are quite destitute, and who must, even for the necessaries of life, be indebted to their neighbours.

The same thing is visibly true with regard to the riches of the mind, which is a plentiful degree of knowledge. It is certainly in itself more happy, to be possessed of this kind of riches, which will enable us to give useful and necessary counsel to the ignorant, than to have a very small share of knowledge our selves, and thereby be exposed to many dangers, which a more knowing mind would easily escape. Nay even with respect to true pleasure, that kind of pleasure which is suited to our better and nobler part, the mind; it is surely happier, to have a
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large extensive compass of knowledge, (notwithstanding that it is capable of being much abused, and through the wicked wantonness of some mens minds, is often wretchedly abused, to their own ruin, and to the doing abundance of mischief in the world) than to have the soul confined to a few ideas, and to miss of the exalted pleasure, which an extensive knowledge will naturally give, and which it is capable of giving, without any ill consequences to attend it. An enlarged understanding may as well be employed in good and useful ways, as in those which are hurtful and pernicious, if it be not our own fault: and therefore it is not the plenty it self that does the mischief, but the ill application of it, as in the case of the other riches before-mentioned. The plenty it self, in both respects, ought to be looked on as a blessing. It loudly calls for thankfulness to God; being a happiness suited to our make, and to our condition in this world.

And all this is very consistent with the assurance, that there shall be hereafter a reward, an ample reward, to those who decently bear the affliction of poverty in this life, or make a wiser improvement of their small degree of knowledge, than their neighbours make of a larger. Nor is it needful, in order to make good the saying of our Lord in the text, to affirm, that it becomes

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us to desire, under the notion of happiness, all the wealth, or all the knowledge either, that can possibly be attained. For it is possible, that we may attain more, either of worldly wealth, or even of knowledge it self, than we shall have wisdom to manage; or indeed, than we can come at, without neglecting some necessary duty, or violating some moral precept. 'Tis enough to justify the words of our text, that it is a more happy thing, to be able to give out of our abundance, than to be under the necessity of receiving. All other considerations being equal, it must be a happier condition; as it is, with respect to ability and power, an approach towards the complete happiness of the most perfect of all beings: whose consummate wisdom is proportioned to his amplitude of power, and does in the most beautiful manner direct the exertions of it, in a perfect harmony with his infinite goodness, to the welfare of his subjects in general, throughout the whole of his boundless dominion; whereas, for want of more wisdom and more goodness than men generally have, they are too apt to be giddy with heights of knowledge it self, as well as with great degrees of riches and power, and thereby in danger of perverting them to wrong purposes. But still this does not alter the nature of things, or contradict our observation
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a benevolent temper.

II

from the words of the text ; that it is happier to be in a condition to help our neighbours, than to stand in need of help from them. But there is no need to enlarge, in a case so plain and clear. The words may further signify,

II. That a disposition to be kind and useful is more amiable, than that which is selfish and confined to narrow views.

The thing it self is certainly true : and it seems to be founded in the text on this account ; that it is a happiness to be universally respected and beloved, which is evidently the case of the benevolent generous temper. All mankind, however differing in other matters, yet agree in shewing more respect to the man who is kind and obliging, tender and compassionate, ready to relieve the necessities, and to comfort the minds of the miserable, and to be useful to all according to his ability, than to him who is of a narrow contracted spirit, insensible of the miseries of his fellow-creatures, deaf to the cries of the distressed, and concerned about nothing but a provision for his worthless self. Nor is it any wonder, that men in general should value and esteem that temper, which is really good for something, that is, which tends to some useful purpose in society ; and

that they should despise that which is good for nothing, but rather hurtful, by heaping up into one hidden corner what ought to be dispersed and made to circulate for a general advantage. For it is from the purposes we answer in society, that our real worth is to be estimated, considering how evident it is, that God has made us social creatures, with a necessary dependence on each other for the benefit of the whole. What judgment then can we form concerning the man, who will do nothing for the community, or for any one member of it; when the shewing kindness to any one member would be shewing kindness to the whole, as it would ease the community of that burden, which otherwise must fall upon them? Such a one must deserve our contempt and abhorrence. Consequently the farther any man is distant from this temper, by an extensive benevolence, proportioned to his circumstances in life; the more justly he deserves our esteem and affection: and it is generally seen, that such persons are so happy as to enjoy it.

But besides the argument drawn from society among our selves, let us turn our eyes towards that most amiable being, who is the author and supreme head of society; and then ask our selves what it is, that directs us in all reason to give him our best affections,

affections, or most readily prompts and inclines us to it. Is it merely his almighty power, or his unerring knowledge and wisdom, or even his perfect righteousness and justice? All these, concurring with universal goodness and benevolence, do indeed with great reason heighten our esteem and reverent affection for this greatest and best of beings: but consider them separately from goodness and benevolence, and they will create in the mind horror rather than love. God is the proper object of our love, because *he is good to all, and his tender mercies are over all his works.* And if we love God for this reason, which is the best that can be given; we shall, for the like reason, give the preference, in our affection and esteem, to those who bear the nearest resemblance to him in that benevolence, which in him shines forth in the greatest perfection. It becomes us thus to love them: and then surely it must become us to imitate, as far as we are able, that supreme benevolence, the likeness to which, though in a lower degree, makes them lovely. The more we attain of this likeness, the more we ourselves shall be truly amiable: and such is the general sense of mankind concerning the real worth of this inward principle, that when they see it exerted in a course of action, they usually make the possessor so far happy,

happy, as to do honour to him for the sake of it. But the chief sentiment recommended to us in the text I take to be,

III. That *it is more blessed to give than to receive*, with regard to the superior pleasure of being helpful, above that of receiving assistance.

Though the receiving a needful supply, by what means soever it comes, is always attended with a delight, proportioned to the concern which possessed the mind before that supply came; yet it is vastly inferior to that noble pleasure, which attends the mind of the generous benefactor. For it is very much allayed, by the consideration of being dependent, in many cases, where the person relieved has as strong a disposition to generosity, as those who relieve him. The man who relieves his distressed brother, or out of his plenty in any kind communicates to him the good thing which he wanted and desired, partakes with him in his joy: but he has besides this another of a superior nature, the joy of feeling himself the happy means of doing good. And a high delight may justly be taken in this, without the least mixture of pride. So it is in the most high himself: and we prove our selves to be his children, by delighting to do good. By
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our benefactions themselves, by relieving the wants of our brethren, and comforting their minds, we are in the place of God towards them ; in the place of him, from whom all supplies must originally be derived, from him who is the *the giver of every good and every perfect gift*. And when, in the communications of our bounty, we after his example take delight in the good we do, when we are pleased with the benefit we confer, because of the good it does ; the delight so conceived is inexpressibly superior to what we are able to conceive upon any other occasion, because it is pure, and unmixed with any mean considerations relating to our own advantage.

There is indeed no evil in entertaining a high degree of delight, on account of the benefits we our selves receive ; especially such as are of great importance to our welfare. Such a delight is so far from being evil, that it highly becomes us. We should prove our selves stupid, if we did not entertain such a joy ; and should be guilty of ingratitude towards the benefactor to whom we are indebted. And therefore they reason in opposition to the very nature of things, who pretend that in the affair of religion we are to have our views only and alone to God's glory, and not at all to our own happiness, or to our deliverance from misery. The
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wise author of our nature never taught us to reason or to act after this manner. On the contrary, he does in his holy word, upon innumerable occasions, call upon men to be wise for themselves, and profitable to themselves: he allures them with the prospect of complete happiness, desiring and intreating them to walk in those paths which lead to it, and to avoid the ways which lead to destruction: moreover he promises pardon to the penitent, to encourage them to forsake their sinful courses; and all needful help, in the discharge of the duties required. Consequently when they have reason to hope, that their past sins are forgiven, and that they are, through the assistance of offered grace, got into the way that leads to life; it becomes them *to rejoice*; it is their duty, as well as their privilege. And accordingly christians are in the New Testament often called upon *to rejoice* on these accounts*.

But are not all these things so many proofs of our wants and necessities; of our sinfulness, whereby we stood in need of pardon; and of our infirmity, whereby we stood in need of help? All these things, I say, are proofs of our wants: and therefore, though there is a high degree of joy justly due for

* iii. Phil. 1. *Finally, my brethren, rejoice in the Lord.*
iv. 4. *Rejoice in the Lord always: and again I say, rejoice.*

the supply of them, yet it is not in its own nature, it is not in respect of nobleness and dignity, to compare with the joy of doing good. This superior kind of joy is satisfactory in its own nature, and wants no addition to it; though, such is the great goodness of God, that he will be sure to reward those who indulge and cherish it. The good we do, out of a sincere desire of being useful, has in a great measure its reward even in this world, by the exalted nature of the pleasure it affords: and it is no wonder, that the joyful sense of God's approbation and complacency, should, in a future state, when all troubles shall be removed at an everlasting distance, increase upon the mind, and make good those many promises of a glorious reward to the beneficent, which the books of holy scripture contain.

But let us turn our thoughts a little more directly to the exalted pleasure of doing good, considered as an imitation of God; who is the most happy of all beings, as well on account of the good which he communicates to his creatures, as on account of his power and ability to communicate. The most high and most perfect of all beings cannot receive any advantage to himself, by the good which he does to his subjects. Yet he takes a delight in conferring benefits upon them. This is a pleasure suited to his
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supreme happiness. The most perfect of all beings can take pleasure in this course of action: it must therefore be a high increase of happiness, to become herein like to him. Indeed the passion of joy is not to be ascribed to God, any more than any other humane passion, because it is attended with weakness. But yet, so surely as there is a difference in things, so surely there will be, even in the divine mind, a pleasing approbation given to one thing rather than to another. Nay, the perfection of the divine mind is of it self a good reason, why he delights in one kind of action rather than in another. And of all kinds of action whatever, the divine mind takes the greatest delight in doing good; because benevolence conducted by wisdom does of all things in the world best deserve to be delighted in. Such is that benevolence, with which the greatest and best of beings is delighted: and such is that, which I would recommend to you. That goodness, which is the delight of the best of beings, is not a blind instinct, or a mere propension to do kind things, without regarding whether they will answer any wise or useful purpose: but it is wise goodness; it is that which has a real tendency to do good, and which therefore deserves the regards of supreme intelligence.

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The usefulness of those kind offices in particular, which you are come hither to perform, I shall forbear to mention, till I have in a more general way, from the thoughts already suggested, exhorted you to encourage within your own minds that temper which our text recommends.

Be persuaded to cultivate this temper,

I. From the consideration of those favourable disposals of providence, which require it of you.

It is certainly a more happy condition, to be able *to give*, than to be under the necessity of *receiving*. But then the natural consequence is; that if this be our case, we should be ready to testify our gratitude towards God, by contributing to the relief of those who want our aid, because it is his providence which makes the difference between our condition and theirs. I have the pleasure of believing, that I speak to not a few, whose plenteous circumstances are, in the natural course of things, owing to their own diligence and exercise of thought, in the conduct of their worldly affairs. These things, where they go hand in hand with truth and justice, deserve to be mentioned with commendation. For to persons of this character a commonwealth is indebted, if not for the continuance of its being, yet certainly

for its welfare and flourishing state. And I make no doubt, that I am speaking likewise to some persons of both sexes, who by their prudence and discretion have not only preserved, but improved what had been raised by the industry of others: in which respect they are unquestionably great blessings to the community, even if we only consider the happy tendency of their good example, towards strengthening the whole. But I would intreat all those without exception, who enjoy a large share of the things of this world, to compare together two sayings of the wisest of men, relating to their plenteous condition, and to observe how well they agree. In the one of them, x. *Prov.* 4. he declares, that *the hand of the diligent maketh rich*. And herein he affirms nothing more, than what may be expected according to the nature of things, in the ordinary course of divine providence. But in the other, which is the 22d verse of the same chapter, he observes, that it is *the blessing of God which maketh rich*. And I hope there is not a person in this assembly who is not ready to acknowledge, that whatever skill and diligence he has employed, as the probable means of raising him to his present condition, whatever prudence and discretion has been exercised, as the means of preserving and increasing a wealthy patrimony;
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both the increase, and even the continuance of it in their hands, is owing to the kind providence of God; who might, if he had thought fit, have suffered any one of a thousand calamities to be the means of depriving them, and laying their condition level with the meanest of those who now want their aid. Have those, who are now by a laudable prudence increasing their substance, never seen instances of persons, as wise and as diligent as themselves, and for a while very successful, who yet at length have sunk into deep distress? Has this change been always and wholly owing to a blameable conduct of theirs? And are they themselves sure, that *their own mountain shall always stand strong*, and that *nothing shall be able to move it*? Are they no way indebted to the kind providence of God, for that prosperity in which they now rejoice? Is it all owing, wholly and intirely to their own skill, and their own industry? If the wisest of men may be believed, and if their own serious reflexions are to be regarded; they are indebted to the divine providence. It is *the blessing of God, which has made them rich*, and kept them from the sorrow and distress of poverty. To him therefore they should make their thankful acknowledgment, in such ways as they believe will be most acceptable to him. Now if we may be allowed to make any
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judgment in this affair from the ample rewards promised in God's holy word to the beneficent; we have good reason to believe, that beneficence will be to him the most acceptable tribute of thanksgiving. Moreover, that generous disposition, which shall receive such distinguishing marks of his approbation hereafter, he sometimes rewards in a good measure even in this world, as I hope some of you your selves have found by experience. 'Tis certain, that in many passages of scripture the blessed God has taught us to expect this: always however reserving to himself certain cases, wherein it seems good to his supreme wisdom to suffer some generous minds to labour under distress, and some of the most ungenerous to be insolent in prosperity. The reasons of these seeming inequalities are best known to him who permits them. We our selves can discover some useful purposes which they answer in the present state; besides that they lay the foundation for exercising those virtues, which will shine forth with a distinguished glory hereafter. In the mean time it is certain; that they who abound in the good things of this life are obliged to shew kindness to their indigent neighbours, as a testimony of their gratitude to him, whose providence made the difference.

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But I would further exhort you to cultivate the benevolent temper,

II. From the consideration of its own real goodness and excellency.

We all know, that it is a more happy condition to be able to help our neighbours, than to want their assistance. But where is the virtue, where is the real goodness, of being wealthy? Does the mere possession of an estate make the owner a wise or a good man? Nay I would further ask; does the success which has crowned his skilful and diligent application, does this prove him a good, or even a just man? Are there not many instances of great estates, under the patient permission of divine providence, raised by the most injurious and oppressive means? And will not a righteous judge as surely punish deceit and oppression, as a benevolent governor reward the generous temper in which himself delights? Where then is the virtue of merely possessing more than our neighbours? Is it not the use of what we have, that proves our wisdom and goodness, or our folly and pravity? And as the use of what we possess must be directed by the inward governing principle; give me leave to appeal to your selves, concerning the real excellency of that spirit which delights to do good, above that which delights to do evil,
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or even forbears to do the good which a kind providence places within its reach. Why has the general sense of mankind condemned the hurtful disposition, by giving it the name of *ill-will*; and commended the kind disposition, by giving it the name of *goodness* it self, and by calling kind offices *good offices*; if they did not hereby acknowledge the infinite superiority of a benevolent above a malicious temper, and even above a spirit of indifferency, which will not concern it self about the welfare of others, or take any thought about being useful? Does not the rich miser himself commend the liberality of those, who kindly relieve his distressed relations, though he cannot find in his heart to do it himself? And does not all the world agree in condemning him; while, with all his commendations of liberality in others, he will suffer even his brother to perish, rather than do any thing to help him? But especially does not all the world agree, in condemning, as the worst of tempers, the malicious, hurtful disposition, which cares not how much mischief it does? Why every argument, that proves the excessive badness of the hurtful disposition, proves the super-eminent goodness of the benevolent spirit, and recommends it to our esteem. So that if we would be *good*, in the most proper sense of the word, we must not be content
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to be merely just; we must be kind, and readily disposed to such offices, as will minister relief and comfort where they are wanted, and delight to be as useful as we can. We are glad indeed, in many cases, when we can meet with justice from our neighbours: but when they do by us barely what is just, we do not think they deserve so much of our esteem and affection, as when besides mere justice they are kind and benevolent.

But leaving this topic, I would encourage you to cultivate the benevolent disposition,

III. From the exalted pleasure, which you will thereby continue to receive, and which will increase within your minds, the more you exercise it.

I pretend to no more than encouraging that disposition, which 'tis plain you have already. It is the design of exercising your benevolence, which brings you hither. It is that, which from year to year induces you, to employ us *to stir up your pure minds by way of remembrance*. If I could suspect, that there was one person in this assembly of the contrary spirit, (and it would be hard to imagine what should incline such a one to come hither upon such an occasion) I would intreat him for his own sake, to give the subject of my text once in his life

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a place in his serious thoughts, and thereby put himself into the way of receiving a pleasure, infinitely greater and nobler than ever his heart yet entertained. But you are accustomed to the relish: and therefore are willing to be reminded; that the delight in doing good is the delight of the greatest and best of beings; that by the exercise hereof we prove our selves *the children of a heavenly Father*; and that *to be merciful and kind, is to be perfect even as he is perfect* *. You reflect with joy upon what you have done already. Now while in the indulging of a generous inclination, you keep within the bounds of that condition which is the allotment of divine providence, (and to advance farther is rashness instead of wise benevolence) how vastly different must your reflexions be from those of the cruel oppressor, or even of him, who with-holds what, as a steward of the bounty committed to his disposal, he ought to distribute? What a joy is it, not only to have endeavoured to perform our duty in this character of stewards; but to find our selves therein the instruments of ministering comfort to the afflicted mind, or important knowledge to the ignorant, or relief to the hungry body, or any other supply, that tends to make one

* Compare v. Matth. 48. with vi. Luke 36.

member of a community innocently cheerful and useful to the rest? What a difference is there between this joy and that of the sensualist, even in the midst of his forbidden injurious pleasures? Even in the gratifications themselves there is as much difference, as there is of superior dignity in the rational mind above the mere animal appetite, common to us with the brute creation. But when besides this it is remembered; that in the one case we are useful to the purposes of society, and in the other are injurious, by introducing confusion and distress; that in the one we imitate the common parent of all good, and do what we can to promote the views of his universal benevolence, and in the other contribute to support the schemes of his and the world's great enemy; the joy suggested by the one kind of reflexions is such as will upon the surest foundations abide and increase within us, while the other is lost in shame and inward dislike. They who follow the dictates of *pure and undefiled religion*, in *comforting the fatherless and the widows in their affliction*, as well as in *keeping themselves unspotted from the world*, have reason to congratulate one another upon the choice they have made; and can never have cause to envy those of the contrary taste.

You have the highest reason to encourage your selves, and one another, in all acts of

kindness and benevolence which the providence of God places within your reach. For nothing so much becomes you, considered as beings originally formed after the image of God, as the imitation of him, *who is good to all, and whose tender mercies are over all his works*: nothing so much becomes you, considered as restored by Jesus Christ, and professedly his disciples, as the imitation of him, *who went about doing good*, both to the souls and to the bodies of men.

Let it be our care to follow his example in both respects, as far as we are able. And let it not be thought unseasonable, that in discoursing on a text, which declares the great *blessedness* of communicating good in general, I venture to exhort you to do all the good you can to the souls of men, by an exemplary conversation, and by taking all prudent opportunities to suggest useful and important sentiments, of the religious kind, to the minds of those whom you may hope to influence. It is natural for me to believe, that the same generous principle, which makes you delight in supplying the outward wants of your fellow-creatures, will give you a pleasure in doing good to their nobler part the mind, by all the means that fall in your way. And abundance of good may be done, in the course of conversation, by all those who in earnest love the religion

religion they profess, without any such officiousness as shall give a distaste. I only take the liberty to hint at what I believe many of you would be glad to see more generally practised. But if we do in earnest desire to see religion flourish, we must resolutely break through the prevailing custom, of introducing nothing but trifles into conversation; and shew, that we are not ashamed to discourse now and then concerning those things, which we profess to make the foundation of our best hopes. How much real good this would do, especially to the rising generation, and how exalted a pleasure the success would afford, you can much better conceive in your minds, than I am able to express in words.

But it is time to conclude, with applying what has been delivered to the special occasion of our present meeting.

You see, from the text it self, what was the disposition of the blessed Jesus, whose disciples you profess to be; what the temper of mind, in which he so delighted, as to have frequently this saying in his mouth, *It is more blessed to give than to receive.* You have likewise seen the truth and the wisdom of this saying; and how much it becomes you to exercise your bounty in proportion to your ability, whenever proper occasions offer. And now that you are come together

ther upon a generous design, ask your selves, whether the same occasion, which has for some years past exercised your liberality, is not still worthy of it; and whether the continuing in this good work will not lay a rational foundation for future pleasing reflexions.

They are widows and orphans, who call to you for relief: the widows and orphans of such, as have spent their strength, and some of them shortened their lives, as well as diminished the little substance they had, in a close application to the ministry of Christ's gospel, and to such studies, as should prepare them for usefulness in it: upon whose death, the yearly reward of their labours ceasing of course, and the patrimony (of those who had any) being reduced; think how great is the change in the survivors condition, besides the affecting loss of the dear relation! There is certainly a respect due to the memory of all those, who have been faithful and successful in the ministry: and you have some to remember, who were eminently serviceable to the interest of religion, and thought no difficulties too great to be struggled with, to qualify them for that service, and to make them useful in it. Let this respect be shewn, by your kindness to their dear remains: especially considering how little prospect most
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of them have, of receiving help in any other way than this, which God has put into your minds to afford in a joint manner.

Surely the widows, who have borne a part of the cares of their deceased relatives, and endeavoured to refresh and comfort them under the wasting fatigues of their employment, deserve some kind regard from those, who rejoice in the good which the the ministers themselves have done. And it is as certain, that the case of the orphans is very compassionate: who, after they have lost the benefit of their father's guidance, and the pleasure of his tender affections, are exposed to a thousand snares attending their poverty. The necessities of both the one and the other claim your compassion. And the assistance you give them may probably be the means of a further good, besides a mere present relief to themselves. This is evident in the case of the children, who by your liberality are placed out to trades: and this has been the case with some of the widowed mothers. The relation of both to ministers, whose very employment kept most of them in a low condition, and effectually prevented them all from entertaining the hope of ever rising to honours or power, may naturally be supposed to plead with you in their behalf. Many of those, whose widows and orphans now want your help, would

would probably have left them in quite another condition, if instead of their self-denying employment they had chosen some other, or even if they could have been persuaded to turn their thoughts another way, when with promising views solicited thereto: and most might have succeeded better, as to the things of this world, if they had not been engaged in the service of the sanctuary. And further, I cannot think it amiss to remind you of what has been suggested already; that it is probable, many of those, whom you may now relieve in their distress, have generous minds like your own; and would take an inexpressible delight in being as kind to others, as they now wish you to be towards them. And if all are not exactly of the same stamp in this respect, yet your kindness is not lost with him, who looks on, and observes with pleasure the principle of sincere delight in doing good.

In the disposal of your bounty you have great reason to be well satisfied, from the integrity, discretion and candour of the managers, who from year to year are chosen out of the several denominations: whose annual reports, made before all such contributors as are willing to attend them, shew that none have reason to complain, that their indigent friends are neglected, or that any other view is proposed, than that of relieving
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ing the most necessitous and most deserving objects.

I have this one thought further to suggest : that in carrying on this good work you contribute in some measure to the propagation of the gospel of Christ ; that is to say, so far, as the hope of any future regards to a surviving family may prove an encouragement to useful ministers, already struggling with difficulties, to go on with their work, instead of turning their thoughts wholly towards some other employment for a support.

For such reasons as these I cannot forbear wishing, that your affection to this good work may increase, and that your hands may be strengthened by the accession of greater numbers. It is with pleasure that I find so many of my reverend brethren in your list of contributors : and it would be a greater pleasure to see that number much enlarged, as in time I hope it will be. 'Tis an honour to our character to contribute, though in a small degree, to that good design, which we recommend to our hearers, and which we all wish may succeed ; which is, that our friends may receive the relief and assistance they want. It is some imitation of the generous apostle ; who *wrought with his own hands*, to alleviate the burden of others ; and thereby more strongly recommended the

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sentiments of his great Lord and Master mentioned in our text, than it was possible for him to do by words only.

I shall finish all with observing: that where there is a good-will to the work, and a relish of *the blessedness* of being useful, it is not merely the quantity of our contributions, which renders them acceptable to that God, to whom the thank-offering is made; but the delight it self in doing good, and the sincere gratitude of the heart, in remembrance of that goodness to which we stand indebted. Let every one therefore give, *according as God has blessed him*; remembring, that he perfectly knows our respective abilities, and the sentiments of our minds relating to them. And *let us give, not grudgingly, or of necessity: for God loveth a chearful giver.*

T H E E N D.



*Written by the same author; and
printed for JOHN NOON, at the
White Hart in Cheapside:*

A View of Popery: taken from the Creed of pope Pius IV. *Containing an Answer to the most material things in the Profession of catholic faith, &c. now in use for the reception of converts into the Church of Rome. The second edition, corrected. 1737.*

Sermons on the following subjects: *The christian's obligation to every thing that is truly good: the necessity of settling good principles in the heart: of oaths and vows: of sound doctrine: the true meaning, dignity and importance of the command, to love God: the second commandment like to the first: the folly of sloth: the intolerable burthen of a wounded spirit: no reason to be ashamed of the gospel of Christ: a humble disposition necessary to the reception of the gospel: the abuse of revelation no disproof of its real worth: eternal life the great promise of the gospel: the good fight of faith: the christian's obligation to study the gospel. To which is added, a Latin discourse, concerning the holiness of places.*

1741.

Witnessed by the Court, before me;
Signed, Sealed, and Delivered in the
Presence of the Court, at the
City of New York, this 4th day of April, 1865.

A
Grand Jury of the County of New York, do hereby certify that the within and foregoing is a true and correct copy of the original of the same, as the same appears from the records of the Court of Sessions of the County of New York, in and to which said records the same are duly filed and recorded.

Witness my hand and the seal of the Court of Sessions of the County of New York, at the City of New York, this 4th day of April, 1865.

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Attest:
The Clerk of the Court of Sessions of the County of New York, do hereby certify that the within and foregoing is a true and correct copy of the original of the same, as the same appears from the records of the Court of Sessions of the County of New York, in and to which said records the same are duly filed and recorded.

